Where is Allaah?

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WHO IS ALLAAH?

Allaah is the proper name applied to the true God who exists necessarily by Himself comprising all the excellent Divine names and attributes of perfection. Allaah is One and Unique. He has no son, no partner, nor equal. He is the sole Creator and Sustainer of the universe. Every creature bears witness to His Oneness, Divinity, and Ruboobiyyah [Ruboobiyyah, inf. of Rubb], and to the uniqueness of His attributes and names.

His essence does not resemble the essences. He does not inhere in anything, nor does anything inhere in Him. "There is none like unto Him." He is the One, the Sole, the Indivisible. He is the Rubb [Some translate the term 'Rubb' into 'Lord', the meaning of 'Rubb' is far more comprehensive than to be restricted to a single word such as 'Lord'. Rubb, means, among other things, the Creator, the Sustainer, the Provider, and the One in whose hands is the disposal of all affairs], who accomplishes all affairs, Allaah is the Omnipotent and the Omniscient.

His knowledge comprehends in perfect manner all things, hidden or manifest. He is greater than can be encompassed by the knowledge of His creatures. He knows everything, and He is aware of all that takes place in the earth and the heavens. Allaah, the Supreme, is the Rubb of everything and has a free hand in disposal of all affairs. His mercy encompasses everything. He is far removed from injustice or tyranny. He is wise in all His actions, just in all His decrees. His justice ensures order in the universe in which nothing is out of order.

There is no one to share His dominion, nor does He take an aide or supporter from His creatures. He is nearer to man than man's own jugular vein [TNQ 50:16].

Whenever a believer is in need or distress calls on Him, He responds. Allaah has revealed His final Scripture, the Qur'aan, to that last of His Messengers, Muhammed sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam who was responsible for conveying the Message of Islam to mankind. He is the Exalted Allaah. Glory is due to Him.

WHERE IS ALLAAH?

Allaah, the Exalted, has described Himself in His Book, and by the tongue of His Messenger sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam as Sublime, Supreme, and Lofty. The Qur'aan is full of proofs relevant to the Loftiness of Allaah.

Ahlus-Sunnah wal-Jama'ah believe in and confirm all of the attributes of Allaah without distorting their meaning, and that Allaah is above His seven heavens, above His 'Arsh, and separated from His creatures, and His creatures are separated from Him.

This discourse will provide the Scriptural proofs of the Loftiness of Allaah is an indivisible part of the inherent faculty of knowing Allaah with which Allaah has created mankind. Although the aqeedah of Loftiness of Allaah is part of man's innate knowledge and cannot be subjected to hypothetical of philosophical argumentation, there are some deviated sects who follow their whims and deny this intuitive and self-evident fact. For this reason, they have twisted Scriptural proofs and distorted them, and manipulated the texts to conform with their deviant argument.

All of the divine attributes are intrinsically related to the attribute of divine Loftiness. Therefore, accepting or rejecting them must be based on accepting or rejecting the Loftiness of Allaah. Whoever believes that Allaah is above His 'Arsh [The Throne of Allaah] and separated from His creatures, also believes in the rest of the attributes of Allaah, and believes as well that the heaves and the earth submit to His will, and that He is the Great Rubb of the worlds. Allaah does whatever He wills and rules according to His Own wishes. Glory be to Him.

Denial of the divine Loftiness is one of the basic doctrinal heresy promoted by the Jahmites [Jahmites are the followers of Jahm bin Safan (d. 128-745), a radical heretic. Among other things, they deny that Allaah, the Exalted, is above His Arsh, and they allege that He is everywhere] and their off-shoots of today in order to confuse the Muslims' minds. Denying this divine attribute also leads by necessity to the denial of the attribute of the istiwaa of Allaah above His Arsh. There is no doubt that the denial of the attributes of Allaah clashes with the clear Qur'aanic verses in which the unique essential attributes and beautiful names of Allaah confirmed. These attributes must be affirmed as identical with Allaah.

The essential divine attributes of Allaah constitute an integral part of His essence and are not superadded to it. They are accepted literally by Ahlus-Sunnah wal-Jama'h without questioning the 'how' of these attributes. To deny them is clear unbelief and heresy. It is for this reason this discourse has been prepared to deal with the creed of Loftiness of Allaah, or the question, 'Where is Allaah?' with the Scriptural evidences from the Qur'aan and the authentic prophetic traditions, as well as the traditions of those early Muslims, the pious predecessors.

THE QURANIC PROOFS

Allaah, the Exalted, commands the believers to refer their disputes and differences to His Book and the Sunnah of His Messenger sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam saying: "And when you differ in anything among yourselves, refer it to Allaah and His Messenger, if you believe in Allaah and the Last Day." [6]

Therefore, the words of Allaah, the Exalted, as well as the words of His Messenger sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam must be held as the ultimate and decisive judgment. No judgment or decision should take precedence over theirs whether in issues related to the divine attributes, or any other religious issue.

By their emphasis on reason in establishing religious truth, the rationalists, the modernists, and the Jahmites assert the preeminence of reason over the divine revelations. Whereas the Loftiness of Allaah which is clearly enunciated in the Qur'aan and the Sunnah, is beyond the reach of reason.

The true believers, contrary to the rationalists, believe that the 'Arsh of Allaah is above the seven heavens. They also believe that having created the seven heavens and the earth and what is in them, Allaah, the Exalted, has His great 'Arsh. Allaah says: "Declare your Rubb, the Supreme, to be far removed from every imperfection or impurity." [7]

The "Supreme", linguistically, is in the superlative signifying that Allaah is higher than everything and is above all things in essence, power, and invincibility. Commenting on this verse, Ibn al-Qayyim, may Allaah grant him His mercy, said: All Muslims in the past and in the present, when supplicating Allaah or imploring His help, they always raise their hands with palms towards the heaven. They do not lower their hands with palms towards the earth, nor do they turn them right or left, nor towards any other direction. They raise their hands up, knowing that Allaah is above them. The Muslims also say in prayer while prostrating, "I declare my Rubb, the Supreme, to be far removed from every imperfection or impurity."[8]

If Allaah is everywhere, as the deviated sects allege, why then the above verse does not read, 'Declare your Rubb, (around you), (below you), or (everywhere)?' Allaah says: "They fear their Rubb above them." [9]

This verse refers to the angels who are above us, and above them is our Rubb, the Blessed, the Exalted. Lest anyone be confused, Allaah confirms in this verse that He is above the angels who are the residents of the heavens: "The Compassionate has rose over the 'Arsh." [10]

And: "And verily, your Rubb is Allaah who created the heaven and earth in six days, and then rose over the 'Arsh." [11]

Allaah also says: "Are you sure that He Who is Above the heaven will not cleave the earth beneath you? Or are you sure that He Who is above the heaven will not send against you a stone-charged hurricane." [12]

The renowned exegetes and commentators are agreed that the One Who is above the heaven is none but Allaah Who has rose over His Arsh and is above it in the manner which suits His Majesty.

Those who believe that Allaah is everywhere base their argument on verses such as:"And He is Ilaah in the Heavens and He is Ilaah on the Earth!"

The term, 'Ilaah' is classical Arabic means, 'the worshipped'; thus the meaning of the above verse is, "It is He Who is worshipped in the heaven and worshipped on the earth".

It would have been redundant were the verse to speak about the existence of Allaah in the heaven and on the earth, for the term Illah' is an adjective of Allaah, while the pronouns, 'He' in the verse is used in lieu of the name 'Allaah', therefor, when the name 'Allaah' replaces the pronoun 'He', we get the proper meaning of the verse: 'And it is Allaah Who is worshipped in the heaven and on the earth'. But according to the deviated sect who consider the term, 'Ilaah' as 'Allaah', we get the redundant meaning, 'And Allaah is Allaah in the heaven and Allaah is on the earth,' a sentence which is grammatically, linguistically and logically incorrect. Qatadah, a renowned exegete, interpreted this verse as: 'He is worshipped in the heaven and on the earth'.

Imaam al-Aajurri said: 'al-Ilaah, is the worshipped. He is worshipped in the heaven as He is worshipped on the earth.'

The Omnipresence of the Divine Knowledge

And He is Allaah above the heaven and on the earth He knows your private and public affairs. And He knows what you achieve. [13]

Those who deny that Allaah is above His 'Arsh, dubiously argue that this verse supports their argument. Their argument is refuted by realizing that this verse refers to the knowledge of Allaah, according to the renowned exegetes, not His essence. They further assert that this verse signifies that the knowledge of Allaah encompasses all things in the heavens and on the earth. The reference to the divine knowledge is made clearly by repeating the clause, 'He knows' twice in this verse, that is to say: "Allaah, the Exalted, knows the hidden and the open, and He knows what you achieve".

Had the verse ended with the word, 'earth', one might take their dubious argument into consideration, but Allaah, the Exalted, makes it abundantly clear that it is His knowledge, not His essence that encompasses all things. Another dubious argument is presented by those who deny the fact that Allaah, the Exalted, is above His 'Arsh, by alleging that the following verse supports their argument.

"Do you not see that Allaah knows all that is in the heavens and all that is on the earth? There is no secret counsel of three, but He is their fourth, nor of five, but He is their sixth, nor of fewer than that, nor of more, but He is with them wherever they may be. Then on the Day of Resurrection He will inform them of what they did. Surely, Allaah knows all things full well." [14]

The above verse, they contend, signifies that Allaah is essentially everywhere. This argument is refuted by the prominent exegete, Ibn Katheer who says: "This means that Allaah is well acquainted with their utterances, and private talks and thoughts."

Al-Qurtubi commented on this verse saying: "He knows and hears their private counsel. This is evidenced by the fact that the opening and concluding clauses of this verse confirm the knowledge of Allaah."

Al-Qasimi says: "The scholars among the Prophet's companions, who transmitted the meaning of the Qur'aan to their successors, held this verse to mean that Allaah is above His 'Arsh, but His knowledge is everywhere."

The linguistic analysis of this verse proves the following points:

1. The opening words of the above verse speak of Allaah's knowledge, not His location.

2. Private counsel, or secret talk, is the theme of this verse. Allaah says, 'There is no secret counsel of three, but He is their fourth.' He does not say, 'There are not three, but He is their fourth'. Thus the meaning becomes quite clear that it is the knowledge of Allaah what encompasses all His creatures.

3. Allaah confirms that He will inform them of their secret talk on the Day of Resurrection.

4.The verse ends, therefore, confirming Allaah's knowledge.

5. Allaah begins the surah of al-Mujadilah (Chapter 58), of which the verse in question is part, with the following verse: "Allaah has indeed heard the speech of the woman who pleads with you concerning her husband and complains to Allaah. And Allaah has heard your dialogue. Verily, Allaah is All-Hearing and All-Seeing." [15] Allaah, the Exalted, states that He has heard the woman who was complaining to the Prophet sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, and has certainly heard her arguing with her husband, but He did not state in the verse that He was their third.

6. In the subsequent verse, Allaah emphasizes that He is well acquainted with the deeds of His slaves. If one were to believe that Allaah is essentially everywhere, it would follow then that He also dwells in filthy places. Only an insane person would dare to impute to Allaah such an attribute. Far removed is Allaah of what they ascribe to Him. It would also follow that Allaah is mingling with His creatures in the heavens and on the earth. Such belief has paved the way for panatheism [16], and promoted the myth of god incarnate. Allaah is far removed from what they ascribe to Him. It should be clear in the minds of the true believers that there is nothing to surround Allaah, the Exalted, nor is there a place to contain Him. Things and places are creatures, and Allaah is above all His creatures. All creatures need Him, while He is separated from His creatures, and stands in need of none of them. The Heaven is the Qiblah of the Du'a Muslims supplicate Allaah with their palms upheld because they believe Allaah is above the heaven. When confronted with this fact, those who deny the Loftiness of Allaah allege that Muslims supplicate in this manner only because heaven is the qiblah of du'aa or supplication.

7. The above allegation, to begin with, has no proof in the Qur'aan or the Sunnah, and it cannot be related to any of the Companions of the Prophet sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam nor to any of the Tabi'een, who succeeded them. There is no mention of this statement in the Book of Allaah or the Sunnah of the Messenger sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam. The issue of the qiblah is central to the religion of Islam, so every Muslim must be aware of it and especially the scholars of the Muslim ummah should have known it.

8. It is an established fact, that the Ka'bah is the qiblah of formal prayer as well as the du'aa or supplication. To declare the heaven or anywhere else to be the qiblah of du'aa is a gross bid'ah (innovation) and a clear breach of the Qur'aan, the Sunnah, and the consensus of the ummah, because the Muslims have one single qiblah, the Ka'bah.

9.The qiblah is the direction to which Muslims turn or face in prayer, and to face something is to look toward it. If the heavens were the qiblah, the Messenger sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam would have commanded his companions, with whom Allaah is pleased, to face the heavens in their prayer. On the contrary, the Muslims are forbidden to uphold their eyes while praying, but are to concentrate on the spot upon which their faces rest during prostration. The Messenger of Allaah sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam warned: "Let those who uphold their eyes while praying stop doing so, lest they become blind." [17] The Qur'aanic verses allow no room for such opinions. Allaah, the Exalted, specifically commanded His Messenger sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam and his ummah to face the direction of the Ka'bah in their prayers, saying: "And from wherever you come forth, turn your face toward the Sacred Mosque." [18] Then Allaah addresses the Muslims: "And wherever you may be, turn your faces toward it." [19] The Loftiness of Allaah is also proven by the following verse: "To Him ascend the good words, and He exalts the righteous deeds." [20]

This verse contains the clear words of Allaah, in which the verb "ascend" is used to indicate that Allaah is above and separated from His creatures. The ascendance of deeds is also proven by the words of the Prophet sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam describing the excellence of the period of time that falls after zawal of zenith. He said, "This is a time when the gates of the heavens are opened, and I hope that a good deed of mine would ascend to Allaah." The verb "ascend" in the text signifies that the good deeds are raised up to reach Allaah, the Exalted. And Allaah says:"The angels and ar-Rooh [21] ascend to Allaah in a day which is fifth thousand years long." [22] The Loftiness of the Creator is made clear by the great distance that separates the angels who inhabit the heavens from their Rubb above them. And Allaah says:"He manages all affairs from the heaven unto the earth." [23]

It should be borne in mind that this verse is preceded by the words of Allaah: "He rose over the Throne." And Allaah also says:"O, Issa (Jesus)! I shall cause you to die, and raise you up to Me." [24] Since Allaah addressed Issa saying: "I will raise you up to Me", what would those who believe that Allaah is everywhere answer when they are asked: "Where is Issa now?" They would say either Issa is everywhere, or he is in heaven. If they claim that Issa is everywhere, they would apostatize as a result of their equating Issa with Allaah in accordance with their claim that Allaah is everywhere. A claim which resembles the Christians' myth of god incarnate. But if they say, "Issa is in the heaven," they would admit that Allaah did raise Issa up to the heaven, and that Allaah is above the heavens. Allaah says:"Surely, your Rubb is the One who created the heavens and the earth in six days; then He istawa[25] on the Throne." [26]

This is one of the seven Qur'aanic verses in which Allaah, the Exalted, refers to His istiwa' on His 'Arsh. Ahlus-Sunnah are certain that the great 'Arsh of Allaah is above the seven heavens. They also believe that Allaah, having created the earth and apportioned its provisions, ascended above His great 'Arsh. Only those who believe otherwise hold these verses to be allegorical. Allaah, they say, "is everywhere", denying that He is above the 'Arsh. Exalted is Allaah, and far is He removed from their ascription. Quoting all or even most of the verses signifying Allaah's attribute of Loftiness would only enlarge the volume of this issue. There are about 215 verses in the Qur'aan containing the verb sent down with reference to either the Qur'aan, the previous Scriptures, or the angels.

PROOFS FROM AUTHENTIC PROPHETIC TRADITIONS

Authentic Prophetic traditions, as well as traditions of the Prophet's companions, with whom Allaah is pleased, and works of the Four Imaama and of the rest of the pious predecessors contain many textual as well as inferential proofs of Allaah's Loftiness. Allaah, the Exalted, praises His Messenger sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam and confirms his veracity and truthfulness by saying: "Nor does he speak of his own desire. It is only revelation revealed (to him.)" [27] And Allaah says:

"And whatsoever the Messenger commands you, adhere to it, and whatsoever he forbids you, abstain from it."

1. And the Messenger of Allaah sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam said: "I have been given the Qur'aan and similar to it therewith." [28]

2. The purified Sunnah is what the Prophet sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam meant by saying: "and similar to it therewith". The Sunnah is the second source of the Shari'ah of Islamic laws. Many traditions deal with the attribute of Allaah's Loftiness. The following are selected authentic traditions to whose authenticity all scholars of the hadith at all times have testified.

3. The Prophet sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam reported his eventful journey from Makkah to Jerusalem (al-Mi'raj) [29] and from there up to the heavens as follows: Jibreel took me up to the lowest heaven and requested its guards to open its gate. He was asked, 'Who is this?' He answered, 'Jibreel.' 'Who is with you?' They inquired. 'Muhammed sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam' He answered. They inquired. 'Has he been invited?' 'Yes'. Jibreel replied. Then someone greeted saying, 'He is most welcome'. The Prophet sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam continued, when the gate was opened, I entered and met Adam there. Jibreel said to me, 'This is your father, greet him'. Adam greeted me back, saying: 'Welcome, pious son and pious Prophet'. Then Jibreel ascended to the second heaven and requested its guards to open its gate. The questioning that took place in the lowest heaven was repeated before the gate was opened. The Prophet sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam described what he saw in every heaven, until finally he was taken up to the seventh heaven where obligatory prayers were prescribed to him. This authentic mutawatir [30] hadith speaks clearly in plain words and straightforward manner which is not liable to misconstruction or farfetched interpretations. The Prophet sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam was taken up to his Rubb from one heaven above the other. The Ahlus-Sunnah wal-Jama'ah believe that the Mi'raj was neither an illusion nor a vision, rather real and essential. Had Allaah been everywhere, why would the Prophet sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam be taken all the way up to the seventh heaven? Allaah would have prescribed to him the Salaah on earth rather than in the seventh heaven.

4. Adullah bin Amr reported that the Prophet sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam said: "Be merciful to those on earth, so that the One above the heavens will be merciful to you." [31] Abu Hurairah reported that the Prophet sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam said: "The angels of death usually attend the dying person. If he is pious, they would address his soul saying, 'O good soul! Come out of the good body, and rejoice in the annunciation of mercy and provision from the Rubb Who is well pleased with you'. The angels would keep coaxing it with these words until the soul emerges from the body. Then it would be taken up to the heaven where permission to open the gates of the heaven would be sought. The guards would inquire, 'Who is this?' 'So and so', the angels would answer.

The guards would say: 'O good soul! You are welcome'. The soul would be flattered by such words and finally be taken up to heaven above which is Allaah." [32] It is quite evident that Allaah, the Exalted, is above the seven heavens. Otherwise, why would the souls and the believers deeds be taken up to the heavens to reach Allaah?

5. Abu Hurairah reported that the Prophet sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam said: "The angel of death used to appear to people whose souls he would collect. When he came to the Prophet of Allaah, Musa alayhis-salaam to collect his soul, Musa punched out his eye. The angel of death ascended to his Rubb, the Glorious, and said to Him, My Rubb! You have sent me down to Musa who punched out my eye. Had he not been honored by You, I would have given him hard time..." The angel of death descended to Musa from the heaven to collect his soul. He did not come to him from east, west, north, or south, nor did he emerge from the earth, and then he ascended to His Rubb Who is above the heavens.

6. Abu Hurairah reported that the Prophet sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam said: "There are hundred levels in Jannah which Allaah has prepared for the Mujahideen who fight in His cause. Between on level and another is a distance which is equal to that between the earth and the heaven. When you ask Allaah, azza wajull, ask Him for Firdaws, because it is situated in the midst and Highest point of Jannah from where the rivers of Jannah spring, and above it is the 'Arsh of the Most Merciful." [33]

7. Mu'awiyah as-Sahmi reported: "I had some sheep which I kept between Uhud and Juwaniyyah with a slave-girl to look after them. One day, I went out to check on my sheep and discovered that a wolf had devoured one of them. Since I am just a human, (I became angry) and struck the girl. Later on, I came to the Prophet sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam and reported to him the incident. He terrified me with the gravity of my action. I said, 'Messenger of Allaah'! Shall I free her (as an expiation of my sin.) He said 'Call her over'. When I did, he asked her, 'Where is Allaah?' She said, 'Above the heavens'. Then he asked her, 'Who am I?' She said, 'The Messenger of Allaah sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam'. Thereupon, the Messenger of Allaah sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam ordered me, 'Free her. She is a believer'." [34] The above hadith, according to Shaikh Kahlil al-Harras, is a luminous proof of the Loftiness of Allaah, the Exalted. Here is a man who wronged his female slave by striking her, and wanted to expiate his sin by giving her freedom in return. The Prophet sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam chose one particular question, 'Where is Allaah?' Then the slave girl gave him the correct answer, 'Above the heaven'. The Prophet sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam declared her to be a believer. Does not the above the hadith stand as a solid proof that Allaah is above the heaven? Doubtlessly, that slave girl, the shepherdess, knew her Rubb more than those ignorantly claim that Allaah is everywhere!

8. Abu Hurairah reported that the Prophet sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam said: "Our Rubb, the Blessed, the Exalted, descends to the lowest heaven every night, during the last third of the night, and says: 'Anyone calls Me, I will respond to him? Is there anyone asking for anything? I will give it to him? Is there anyone seeking My forgiveness, I will forgive him?' " [35] The words of the Prophet sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam: 'Our Rubb, the Blessed, the Exalted, descends to the lowest heaven', clearly indicate the essential Highness or Loftiness of Allaah, the Exalted. Were Allaah to exist everywhere, there would be no need for the Prophet sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam who knew Allaah best, to say, 'Allaah descends', nor would there be a reason to distinguish one portion of the

night from another. There is only one answer to this: Allaah, the Blessed, the Exalted, is above the seven heavens, and above the great 'Arsh.

9. Abu Hurairah reported that the Prophet sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam said: "Allaah will descend to His slaves on the Day of Resurrection." [36] It is the Day when Allaah will come down to pass His judgment.

10. In another tradition, the Prophet sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam said: "Allaah will gather the first and the last of His slaves for an appointed certain Day, when they will remain for forty years with their eyes uplifted towards heaven waiting for the decisive judgment. Allaah will then descend in coverings of clouds from His 'Arsh to the Kursi."

THE STANDPOINT OF THE COMPANIONS Radiallaahu 'anhum

1. Zainab, the wife of the Prophet sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, used to claim excellence over the rest of his wives by telling them, 'It is only your parents who gave you in marriage to the Prophet sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, while it is Allaah Who gave me in marriage to him from above the seven heavens.' [37]

2. In another narration, she said to the Prophet sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, 'It is the Rahmaan, the Merciful, Who married me to you from above His 'Arsh.'

3. Ibn Abbas, may Allaah be pleased with him, said to Aa'ishah, the wife of the Messenger of Allaah sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam when she was on her death bed: "Of all his wives you were the most beloved to the Messenger of Allaah sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, and he used to live only the pure. Allaah, the Exalted sent down your exoneration from above the seven heavens which was brought down by Jibreel. There is not a single masjid of the masajid of Allaah but the verses of your exoneration [38] are recited in it day and night." Aa'ishah, the wife of the Prophet sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam in this world and in the world to come, Mother of the Believers, whom the pervasive-minded sect tried to dishonor, but Allaah, the Exalted, exonerated her honor and condemned those who spread the lies against her.

4. In his speech subsequent to the death of the Prophet sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, Abu Bakr as-Saddiq said: "He who was worshipping Muhammed sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, (let him know that) Muhammed is dead, and he who was worshipping Allaah, (let him know that) Allaah is above the heaven Ever-Living, never dies'." [39]

5. Ibn Umar passed by a shepherd and asked him, 'Do you have a sheep fit for slaughter? 'Its owner is around', the shepherd answered. 'Tell him that the wolf devoured it'. Ibn Umar said to him. Thereupon, the shepherd uplifted his head towards the heaven and said, 'Then where is Allaah?' Ibn Umar responded, 'By Allaah. It is I who should have said, 'Where is Allaah.' He later on bought off the sheep and the shepherd and freed the latter and gave him the sheep. [40]

6. Abdurrahman al-Mahdi [41] said: "There is no one more evil among the people of whims than the followers of Jahm. All their deviant beliefs revolve around one theme; 'There is no one above the heaven.' I believe, by Allaah, that they should not be married from, nor to inherit Muslims nor to be inherited by Muslims." This opinion of Ibn Mahdi is shared by many among the pious predecessors.

7. Wahab b. Jareer said: "Beware of the opinions of Jahm's followers, for they try to convince people that there is nothing above the heavens. Their statements are only from Iblees's revelation, and it is only infidelity".

THE STANDPOINT OF THE FOUR RENOWNED IMAAMS

Imaam Abu Hanifah [43]

Abu Muti' Al-Balkhi reported:"I asked Imaam Abu Hanifah about a person who says, 'I do not know whether my Rubb is, above the heavens or on earth?' Abu Hanifah, may Allaah grant him His mercy, said: 'A person who makes such a statement becomes an apostate because Allaah, the Exalted says, 'The Merciful has ascended above the 'Arsh, and the 'Arsh of Allaah is above His heavens'. I further asked Abu Hanifah, 'What if such a person admits, Allaah is above His 'Arsh, but exclaims, I do not know whether His 'Arsh is above the heavens or on earth'. Abu Hanifah responded: 'If he denies that the 'Arsh is above the heavens, he is an apostate." [44] If the person apostatizes by saying that he did not know where is the 'Arsh of Allaah, then by right a person who denies the Loftiness of Allaah altogether is definitely worse than an apostate.

Imaam Maalik [45]

Abdullah bin Nafi' reported: Maalik bin Anas said:'Allaah is above the heavens, but His knowledge encompasses everything. Nothing escapes His knowledge.' [46]

Imaam Ash-Shafi'ee [47]

Imaam ash-Shafi'ee said:"The creed which I hold is the same creed the Muslims before me were holding, namely, the Testimony of Faith: "There is no god worthy of being worshipped except Allaah, that Muhammed is the Messenger of Allaah, and that Allaah is above His 'Arsh, above the heavens. He descends to the lowest heaven whenever He wishes." [48] Imaam ibn Khuzaimah, a Shafi'ite himself, said: "Whoever disacknowledges that Allaah is above His 'Arsh, above His seven heavens, and that He is separated from His creatures, is a Kafir, (unbeliever). Such person must be ordered to repent and disavow his belief, or else he must be beheaded and thrown on a garbage dump so that neither Ahlul-Qiblah [49] nor Ahludth-dthimmah [50] be annoyed by the foul odor of his carcass." [51] Abu Bakr Muhammad at-Tamimi, a Shafi'ite Imaam of Naisaboor, said:"I do not pray behind a person who denies the attributes of Allaah and does not recognize that Allaah is above His 'Arsh." [52]

Imaam Ahmad [53]

He was asked: "Is Allaah above His 'Arsh, above the seventh heaven, separate from His creatures, and is His knowledge and power encompassing everything everywhere? He replied: 'Certainly, He is above His 'Arsh and nothing escapes His knowledge." [54] All of the above show that the entire Muslim ummah, in the past and present, is in unison regarding the belief in the Loftiness and Supremacy of Allaah, the Exalted.

DUBIOUS ARGUMENTS

Adherents of certain deviant sects promote a false belief that Allaah is omnipresent Who inheres in His creation. Rational arguments are deadly available to refute the blasphemy of the Jahmites and those who try to revive their belief today. To prove that Allaah is above His 'Arsh, and above the seventh heaven in a manner that suits His Majesty, the Imaam of Ahlus-Sunnah, Ahmad bin Hanbal, may Allaah be pleased with him, refuted their belief more than one thousand years ago, when he wrote: "Where Allaah is and Where He is not - An exposition of the denial of the Jahmites that Allaah is above the 'Arsh."

We asked them "Why do you deny that Allaah is above the 'Arsh when He has said: 'The Merciful has the 'Arsh? [55] And again,' 'Who in six days created the Heavens and the earth then the 'Arsh,' [56] They replied: "He is under the seven earths as He is on the 'Arsh; He is in heaven, on earth and in every place; there is no place where He is not, nor is He is one place to the exclusion of any other." And they quoted the verse: "And He is Ilaah in the heavens and He is Ilaah on the Earth!" If you wish to prove the falsehood of the Jahmites who claim that Allaah exists everywhere, not in one particular place, ask them, 'Is it not true that Allaah was existent when there was nothing in existence?' The Jahmites' answer would be: "Certainly, there was nothing before Allaah." Then ask them, "Did Allaah create the creation within Himself or outside of Himself?" The Jahmites would be compelled to choose on of the following three answers:

1. If the Jahmites assert that Allaah created the creation within Himself, they would then become apostate instantly by claiming that the Jinn, humans and Satans are all dwelling within Allaah.

2. If the Jahmites assert that Allaah created the creation outside Himself but dwelled in them afterwards, they would also become apostate instantly by claiming that Allaah dwells in His creatures.

3. But if the Jahmites say that Allaah created the creation outside Himself and has never dwelled in them, they would by giving this answer, join the folds of Ahl-As Sunnah, for by giving this answer they denounce their own deviant beliefs.

Allaah, the Exalted, described Himself in the Torah too that He is above His creatures. Ka'bul-Ahbaar said: "Allaah, azza wajall, [57] said in the Torah, 'I, Allaah Am above My slaves, and My 'Arsh is above My creatures, and I am upon My 'Arsh running the affairs of My slaves. Nothing is hidden from Me neither in heaven nor on the earth." [58]

Finally, it may be worthwhile to say that even the enemy of Allaah, Fir'awn (Pharoah), who flagrantly claimed to be a god of his people, knew where Allaah is more than the followers of Jahm today. Allaah says: And Fir'awn said, 'O, Haman, build for me a tower that I may reach the ways; the ways to heavens so that I may have a look at the Ilaah of Musa.' [59] Now consider the words of Fir'awn who wanted Haman to build a tower for him that he might climb all the way to the heavens to see the Rubb of Musa, for Musa already told him that Allaah to Whom he is inviting him is above the heavens, and compare this with the groundless argument of the Jahmite off-shoots of today. A Muslim wonders how could those who believe that Allaah is Omnipresent rationalize such assertion knowing that Allaah, the Omnipotent, will collect the earth in His hand and fold the heavens in His right hand, as evidenced by the following divine stern warning. And they have not venerated Allaah with the veneration that is due Him, for on the Day

of Resurrection, the earth will be collected in His hand and the heavens will be folded up in His right hand. [60] Were the above verse to be the only proof of Allaah's Loftiness, it would have been more than sufficient. It is certainly sufficient to those who fear Allaah and give Him the true veneration that is due to Him.

CONCLUSION

The first three Muslim generations whose righteousness the Messenger of Allaah sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam testified for, and whose merits surpassed the merits of all succeeding generation. They are the Companions of the Prophet sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam and the two generations that followed them. They all believed in the apparent meaning of the Qur'aanic ayaat that deal with the divine attributes without giving them farfetched interpretations based on Greek philosophies.

The Believer must believe that there is none like unto Allaah, the Exalted, in His essence, attributes, nor His actions. He must also believe that Allaah stands in need of none of His creatures. Neither a thing nor a place encompasses Him. He is above His 'Arsh, above the seventh heaven, and above all His creature essentially and realistically not allegorically.

There is none of His creatures that touches Him. Based on this it is not permissible to say that Allaah is everywhere, or He inheres in any of His creatures, for Allaah was when there was nothing. He who asserts that Allaah is not outside the universe, not only denies the existence of Allaah, but he worships a non-existent god. We ask Allaah to keep us on the straight path of His Messenger sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam and his Companions and to make us join their company on the Day when neither wealth nor offspring would avail. Walhamdu lillahi Rabbil-aalameen.

This discourse has been based mainly on two books: Ithbat Uluwil-Lah, by Usamah bin Yusuf al-Qassas, may Allaah grant him His mercy, and Ar-Rahman alal Arsh Istawa, by Dr. Awad Mansoor

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FOOTNOTES:

6. Q 4:59

7. Q 87:1

8. Q 87:1

9. Q 16:50

10. Q 20:2

11. Q 7:54

12. Q 67:17.18

13. Q 6:3

14. Q 58:7

15. Q 58:1

16. Pantheism is the belief that Allaah and the universe constitute one being, as opposed to the fundamental belief of the Oneness of Allaah and the separateness of His creations, as stressed by Ahlus-Sunnah wal-Jama'ah.

17. Imaam al-Bukhaaree, Imaam Muslim and others.

18. Q 2:150

19. Ibid.

20. Q 35:10

21. Ar-Rooh is Jibreel, peace be upon him.

22. Q 70:4

23. Q 32:5

24. Q 3:55

25. 'Istawa' p.t. is derived from the verb sawiya and its derivative form istiwaa' to mount on the Throne. The Ash'arites, the Mu'tazilites, the Jahmites, and those who uphold their belief, hold the attribute of Istiwaa' to be only symbolic, whereas Ahlus-Sunnah accept this and the other essential attributes of Allaah literally without drawing parallels.

26. Q 7:54

27. Q 53:4.527 Q 53:4.5

28. Abu Dawood.

29. Imaam al-Bukhaaree, Imaam Muslim and others.

30. This is the strongest category of the authentic ahadith.

31. Imaam al-Bukhaaree, Imaam Muslim, and others.

32. Imaam Ahmad, al-Hakim, and others.

33. Imaam al-Bukhaaree, Ahmad, and others.

34. Imaam Muslim, Abu Dawood, and others.

35. Imaam Maalik, Imaam al-Bukhaaree, Imaam Muslim, and others.

36. At-Tirmidthi and others.

37. Al-Bukhaaree.

38. The verses in question are in surat An-noor #24:11 thru 20.

39. Imaam al-Bukhaaree and others.

40. Ath-Thahabi.

41. He was a great scholar and a leading authority in the Prophetic traditions, and a contemporary of Imaam ash-Shafi'ee, (135-198H.)

42. Al-Bukhaaree, adth-Thahabi and others.

43. Abu Hanifah, one of the four Imaam was prominent jurist living from 80 to 150 AH.

44. Sharhut-Tahawiyyah, p.288

45. Maalik bin Anas, one of the four Imaams, was prominent jurist and traditionist (93-179 H).

46. Abdullah bin Ahmad, as-Sunnah, and others.

47. Abdullah Muhammad bin Idris ash-Shafi'ee one of the prominent four Imaams. Prominent jusrit (150-204 H).

48. Al-Juyoosh al-Islamiyyah, Ibn al-Qayyim, p.93

49. The Muslims in general.

50. Christian or Jewish subjects of a Muslim country.

51. Ibid.

52. Ibid.

53. Ahmad bin Muhammad bin Hanbal, the great Imaam, was nicknamed the Imaam of Ahlus-Sunnah. This name was to become in Islam the watchword for uncompromising belief. Imaam Ahmad, may Allaah be pleased with him, was a hero and victim of the violent inquisition during the reign of the Caliph al-Ma'moon, who ordered his subjects, under pain of severe punishment, to adopt the belief that the words of Allaah of which the Qur'aan is composed are created, thus resembling the belief of the Christians. Imaam Ahmad, who refuted to endorse this belief was subjected to harassment, imprisonment, and torture.

54. Al-Juyoosh al-Islamiyyag, Ibn al-Qayyim, p.123.

55. Q 20:4

56. Q 25:60

57. Azza wajall, Allaah is the Powerful, the Glorious.

58. Ath-Thahabi and others.

59. Q 40:36,37

60. Q 39:67